

Faith and Inspiration

First Contact

Throughout the history of Christianity, the Church has supported and implemented the endeavor of evangelism in various ways. For some, this would seem to be a natural impulse as a matter of promulgation and expansion of religion.

For authentic believers who regard the redemption of humanity (and all creation for that matter) through Jesus as surpassing any mundane institutional injunctions or ecumenical campaigns, sharing the gospel is a fundamental essence of our response to that gospel.

When one truly embraces something as "good news," one is inclined to bestow that upon others in consideration for their welfare, and not simply as a means to advance the ranks and agenda of an organization. There is a persistent kind of assumption that evangelism must be conducted in the most vocally strident and boisterous fashion possible to be effective.

Observation and experience can attest to the insight that an adversarial and dogmatic tone, however sincere or passionate, might not always be received as an ideal "first contact" encounter for those who are unaccustomed to stark and severe presentations of spirituality.

A cursory survey of New Testament evangelistic incidents might indeed lead one to conclude that preaching the gospel is somehow inherently a confrontational and melodramatic affair. However, as is often the case, when we tend to focus on histrionics and spectacle, we might miss some of the more nuanced and modest displays of Christian ministry exemplified throughout the scriptures.

While we all likely understand the importance of sharing the gospel in as direct a manner as possible, it is also helpful to recognize at the same time that there are profuse opportunities for courtesy, kindness, and creativity.

It is undeniable that the apostle Peter's sermon following the proliferation of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost subsequent to Jesus's ascension is one of the most adamant, emphatic, and convicting demonstrations of early Christian proselytizing (Acts 2:14-42).

It may be interesting to note that his sermon in this scenario appears quite tailored to his target audience (local Jews and Jewish pilgrims to Jerusalem). It would probably not be unreasonable to conclude that a similar message might not prove to be quite as effective with any other gathering.

A good contrast to this instance of delivering the gospel also involves the apostle Peter when God directed him to reach out to the Roman centurion Cornelius (Acts 10).

Peter's vision guided him to the realization that the gospel was intended for everyone, and so he was able to share the message of redemption with a Gentile, someone he might not ordinarily have considered to be an intended recipient of that message. Peter and Cornelius's first contact experience in this situation was rather different from what had occurred

effort to observe and study the inhabitants of a given planet that has not yet established a presence among the galactic community. Despite their best attempts to remain unobtrusive and avoid interfering with the normal cultural development of the world, one of the mission participants is discovered after being injured during an incident. Captain Picard and Counselor Troi realize that it has become necessary to directly interact with some specific representatives of the population in order to both effect a rescue and establish an initial invitation to communication.

PICARD: We learn as much as possible about a planet before we make first contact.

TROI: One of the things we monitor are your broadcast signals, your journalism, your music, your humour. Try to better understand you as a people.

MIRASTA: I hate to think how you would judge us based on our popular music and entertainment.

PICARD: Indeed, we do get an incomplete picture, which is why we also do surface reconnaissance. MIRASTA: You've had people on our planet?

TROI: For several years. PICARD: These are specialists, highly trained observation teams, superficially identical to yourselves and therefore able to blend naturally into your society. You see, we have discovered that the most hazardous aspect of these missions is a lack of sufficient information.

It does not require unusual exercises of imagination to comprehend that a "lack of sufficient information" can lead to an array of issues arising from potential misunderstanding and ignorance.

While the gospel itself remains singular and consistent in its validity and relevance, the manner in which we are able to express and apply its truths can vary from one context to another. As Paul might describe it, there is indeed one gospel; but there is not necessarily only one appropriate technique for sharing that gospel. Paul himself explains his own approach of becoming "all things to all people" in some cases (1 Corinthians 9:19-23).

At times, a seemingly "aggressive" method might appear suitable, while in other situations, subtlety and sympathy might prove to be more effective. First contact with the gospel need not always be of a "fire and brimstone" nature. It should not be surprising that this approach might not resonate with every type of individual. We can, and perhaps should, consider the concerns, needs, and motivations of those we seek to bless with the message of redemption, and consider that the message is intended to address humanity holistically.



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earlier in Jerusalem at Pentecost.

Here, Peter preached a message of the sacrificial work of Jesus's life, death, and resurrection similar to what he had preached before, but in this context, he was led to emphasize the inclusive nature of the redemption provided through Jesus.

Thankfully, God had prepared Peter's mind and heart to adapt not the message but his delivery to the unique circumstances.

Another practical illustration of adjusting the style of transmission (but not the essential message) in evangelism is when the apostle Paul shared the gospel with the residents of Athens (Acts 17:16-34). There, Paul, having familiarized himself with their particularly pagan practices and beliefs, addressed their tendency to associate various aspects of life with individual deities.

By assessing their culture and customs beforehand, he was able to devise a formulation of the gospel that made sense in their context and ultimately appealed to the sensibilities of many members of that assembly. Paul's first contact in this case proved to be fairly productive.

In "Star Trek" lore, the notion of first contact between species across the galaxy evolved toward a principle of highly regulated and measured procedures practiced by Starfleet and the United Federation of Planets.

In an episode of "The Next Generation" television series, some crew members of the 24th century starship Enterprise are engaged in a particular first contact reconnaissance mission. In the story, we witness how the team exerts great

Brain Health Expert's Top Foods to Boost Mental Health



It's spring, well, officially at least! But as we all know, in South Florida cold temperatures or extremely hot temperatures can and will stick around for many weeks after the start of spring. To help boost and maintain our mental health on this last final stretch, let's look at some foods that should be on our plates over the next few weeks.

Dr. Teralyn Sell, Psychotherapist and brain health expert, shares her top 4 end of winter foods to help boost brain and mental health for a better and brighter spring!

Food #1: Fatty Fish Fatty fish, particularly salmon, is a great source of vitamin D and Omega 3 fatty acids and tryptophan. Omega 3 fatty acids have been shown to support brain health and improve mood. Making fatty fish an excellent food option that packs a big punch for improved mental health particularly in this transition from winter to spring.

Food #2: Oatmeal Oatmeal is great for blood sugar stabilization and for tryptophan. Oatmeal (plain and simple) is a complex carbohydrate which is like a slow burn. It won't spike blood sugars. It is

not well known for tryptophan, but it sure ranks up there. Tryptophan is a precursor to serotonin, combine this with its blood sugar stabilizing properties and you have a grain that is great for mental health.

Food #3: Eggs Eggs, particularly the yolk of the egg is rich in essential vitamins and minerals. Eggs, along with being a great source of protein, just one egg contains about 37 IU of vitamin D. The yolks can also boost your blood levels of tryptophan which is a precursor to serotonin which can help with your mood and sleep.

Food #4: When in doubt supplement Vitamin D is a popular supplement, but there are some things to look for. First it is important to get your vitamin D levels checked by your doctor. Do this a couple times a year so you know when or if to supplement. Vitamin D3 is best when it is in a synergistic blend with K2. This helps with absorption. Vitamin D supplements can be toxic when taken in the incorrect dosage, so be sure to check with your doctor first.

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Could importing medicine save you money? Facts about personal prescription importation

BPT - The COVID-19 pandemic has underscored the importance of having access to safe, reliable and affordable medications. This is especially critical for Americans with underlying medical conditions who struggle to afford medications. To offset rising drug costs, many Americans import pharmaceutical drugs from Canada and other international pharmacies.

According to the Campaign for Personal Prescription Importation (CPPI) annual survey, savings on prescription medications are greater than ever - \$3,744 a year on average. The CDC estimates that over 5 million Americans personally import medicines from abroad, where prescription drugs are 50-90% cheaper than in the U.S.



"I have been ordering necessary, affordable prescriptions from licensed Canadian pharmacies for over 10 years," said Linda Bull. "If I hadn't found this alternative, I couldn't have afforded my prescriptions for COPD and hormone replacement therapy for post-menopausal symptoms."

Bull is just one of over 131 million Americans who take prescription medications and need immediate and long-term cost-saving solutions. The CPPI survey

uncovered several surprising facts about American personal drug importation.

Five key findings from the report.

1. Price drives drug importation In January 2022, U.S. prices increased on over 800 medications, causing unreliable access to affordable prescription drugs for millions of Americans. One in three Americans say they've skipped medical treatment due to costs in the previous three months. Missed medication is a leading cause of rising medical expenses, complications and even death.

2. Savings On average, Americans save 73% by personally importing pharmaceutical drugs from certified online Canadian pharmacies. Personal drug importation resulted in about \$3,744 in savings in 2021, an average savings cost of \$312 per month compared to U.S. pharmaceutical costs.

3. Drug importation on the rise Because of access to lower-priced medication, personal drug importation is on the rise. In 2019, 8% of Americans reported ordering prescription drugs from online Canadian pharmacies, which increased to 17% by 2021. This trend is likely to continue increasing as more and more people experience reliable, affordable access to life-

saving medications. Of those surveyed, 98% of respondents would recommend importation to their friends and family members.

4. Cost of prescription drugs affects voting The rising cost of medication in the U.S. is affecting how Americans vote. Over 96% of CPPI survey respondents say that addressing the high cost of prescription drugs in the U.S. is important to the way they vote.

Unfortunately, new legislation may make it impossible for many to afford their medications. The Domain Reform for Unlawful Drug Sellers Act (DRUGS Act) would prevent Americans from personally importing pharmaceutical drugs from licensed international pharmacies. PersonalImportation.org. There, you can also find certified websites for prescription drugs from licensed Canadian pharmacies.

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